DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 468 300 EA 031 866

AUTHOR Biddle, Julie K.

TITLE Accelerated Schools as Professional Learning Communities.

PUB DATE 2002-04-00

NOTE 33p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association (New Orleans, LA, April 1-5, 2002).

PUB TYPE Reports - Research (143) -- Speeches/Meeting Papers (150) -- Tests/Questionnaires (160)

EDRS PRICE EDRS Price MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.

DESCRIPTORS *Academically Gifted; *Acceleration (Education); Advanced Courses; *Community Cooperation; *Educational Change; *Institutional Mission

IDENTIFIERS *Accelerated Schools; *Learning Communities

ABSTRACT

The goal of the Accelerated Schools Project (ASP) is to develop schools in which all children achieve at high levels and all members of the school community engage in developing and fulfilling the school's vision. But to fully implement the ASP model, a school must become a learning community that stresses relationships, shared values, and a strong culture. This paper examines the point at which the ASP model develops into a learning community. It also discusses factors that enhance or constrain the development of a learning community within the framework of the model. Utilizing the literature on learning communities, a study was conducted at 20 selected schools in the Midwest. Data were gathered from surveys, school documents and records, interviews with stakeholders, and observations at each subject school over a 3-year period. Results imply a connection between implementation of the ASP model and the formation of a learning community. But implementation of the model alone will not create a learning community. Other factors-including time, a school's affinity with the values of the model, and the commitment of the model provider-are necessary for an accelerated school to become a learning community. (Contains 12 references and 2 appendices of survey questions.) (WFA)

Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made
from the original document.

ED 468 300

Accelerated Schools as Professional Learning Communities

Paper presented at American Educational Research Association
April 2002
New Orleans, LA

Julie K. Biddle, Ph.D.
Director
Dayton Satellite Center for Accelerated Schools
300 College Park
Dayton, OH 45469-0510

(937) 229-4517
FAX: (937) 299-2169 or 229-4824
Julie.Biddle@ notes.udayton.edu

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☑ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

J. BIDDLE

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

2

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

EA 031 866

Context

The Accelerated School Project (ASP) is based upon developing schools: where all children achieve at high levels regardless of their backgrounds, that treat all children as gifted and talented, that engage all members of the school community in developing a vision of their ideal school, and where collaboration and joint decision making take place in order to achieve that vision. The literature provided by the Project suggests that in order to fully implement the Accelerated School Model, the school must become a learning community.

In this paper I use the literature regarding characteristics of professional learning communities as a lens for determining the intersection between the ASP model implementation in selected schools and the development of a professional learning community. I also discuss factors that enhance or constrain the development of a learning community within the framework of the Accelerated School Model.

This research is significant for the educational community in general and the Accelerated School community in particular. Today's educational landscape requires ASP schools to show improvement in student learning within a rather short period of time (typically 3-5 years). Creating a learning community often requires a school's culture to change significantly. It is this intersection that seems to be the turning point for many schools. It is critical for model providers to examine the factors that both enhance and constrain the creation of a culture where learning is promoted for all.

Literature Lens

The work of DuFour and Eaker (1998) is the primary lens through which the professional learning community research at hand was viewed. They set forth credible evidence of both why educational reform has failed to deliver improved conditions for children and how to go about establishing professional learning communities. They suggest that most educational reform fails due to the complexity of the task, a misplaced focus, lack of clarity on intended results, lack of perseverance, and failure to appreciate and attend to the change process (p. 13). Others have suggested similar reasons (see also Elmore, 1996; Goodlad, 1984; Levin, 1996; and Newmann & Wehlage, 1995).

Before going further, it is necessary to establish a working definition of what I mean by a professional learning community. If schools are to be significantly more effective they must break from the industrial model upon which they were created and embrace a new model that enables them to function as professional learning organizations. Organization suggests a partnership enhanced by efficiency, expediency, and mutual interests. Community places greater emphasis on relationships, shared ideals, and strong culture—all factors critical to school improvement and all integral to implementation of the ASP model. The challenge for educators and model providers is to help schools create a *community of commitment*. A community committed to providing powerful learning opportunities for all stakeholders—students, staff, and families. A community committed to creating a professional learning community.

What Does a Professional Learning Community Look Like?

DuFour and Eaker (1998) suggest that at least five factors are necessary in a school if it is to become a professional learning community. First, the school must have a shared mission (why it exists), vision (where it is going), and a set of core values. Second, the school must be engaged in collective inquiry. Third, the school must be organized in collaborative teams that willingly take risks and carefully experiment with the teaching and learning process. Fourth, the school must be focused on continuous improvement and regularly struggle with key questions like: What is our fundamental purpose? What do we hope to achieve? What are our strategies for becoming better? What criteria will we use to assess our improvement efforts? Finally, the school must be data and results driven.

> Members of a professional learning community recognize and celebrate the fact that mission and vision are ideals that will never be fully realized, but must always be worked toward. In short, becoming a learning community is less like getting in shape than staying in shape—it is not a fad diet, but a never-ending *commitment* (italics mine) to an essential, vital way of life. (p. 28)

Accelerated schools begin answering these questions and many others in the first few steps of implementation. As schools set their vision and collectively take stock of their strengths and challenges, they come to common understandings about their fundamental purpose, what they hope to achieve,

and strategies for improving. These decisions are based on data collected using the inquiry process in collaborative work groups.

The link between collaborative processes to resolve key instructional questions and a commitment to results cannot be overstated. Too often, classroom teachers are detached from the results of their teaching because they have had so little voice in the key decisions leading to those results. They teach a curriculum that was developed and adopted by someone else; they use texts and materials selected by someone else; they adhere to a scope and sequence determined by someone else; and they use assessment tools chosen by someone else. When student achievement falls short of expectations, teachers cite unrealistic curricular outcomes, poor instructional materials, inappropriate assessments and any number of other reasons. It is very difficult to establish an orientation toward results in an environment where teacher ownership is lacking; nevertheless, some states and districts continue to operate on the premise that they can improve the effectiveness of their schools by simply mandating what teachers are to teach and what students are to learn.

How Are Professional Learning Communities Formed?

Schools are not miraculously transformed into professional learning communities. Issues of authority, control, structures and internal and external conditions either enhance or constrain the process.

A school must have the organizational capacity to promote a unity of purpose. That is, human, technical and social resources must be organized

into an effective collective enterprise. The organization must also generate clarity and consensus about its central goals for student learning. Finally, a sense of collective responsibility must be held by the various stakeholder groups in order to cooperate and collaborate in the work of attaining their vision (see Newmann & Wehlage (1995) for a further discussion).

The school that is successful in forming a professional learning community has a climate that supports and respects the work of its stakeholders. It encourages innovations. The professional learning community is characterized by an interdependent work culture where a number of groups work on various issues (almost all focused on improving student learning) at the same time. In the professional learning community school, the structure of the school calendar provides the necessary time for teams and groups to plan and work together. Autonomy is given to the school from external constraints (e.g., district mandates for professional development). Teachers experience a high level of efficacy. They recognize that they are one of the primary decision makers regarding the teaching and learning at their school.

Occasionally school administrators, board members, or central office personnel object to giving teachers the authority to make key instructional decisions. They point to the organizational chart and insist that they should make the decisions by virtue of placement at the top of the chart. Rather than asking, "Who's in charge?" learning communities ask, "How can we best get results?" The answer to this question lies in empowerment of teachers through collaborative processes that provide them with authority that is commensurate

with their responsibility. Without collaborative processes that foster ownership in decisions, schools will not generate the shared commitments and results orientation of a learning community. Accelerated schools link responsibility and authority by emphasizing empowerment coupled with responsibility as one of its foundational principles.

Kanter (1983) states, "Freedom does not mean the absence of structure—letting employees go off and do whatever they want—but rather a clear structure that enables people to work within established boundaries in creative and autonomous ways" (p. 248). Members of a professional learning community give up a measure of individual autonomy in exchange for significantly enhancing collective empowerment.

A learning community does not leave curriculum alignment to chance. It ensures that a teacher's daily instruction is consistent with the essential learning goals identified through the curriculum development process. It recognizes that developing a formal course of study is a meaningless exercise if teachers ultimately teach something else. It insists that students are asked to learn content that has been chosen based on essential outcomes rather than on the idiosyncrasies of an individual teacher. It establishes the expectation that each instructional unit will provide students with the opportunity to practice the kinds of behaviors or skills they will be asked to demonstrate during the assessment phase of the curriculum. Finally, it ensures that assessments are aligned with curriculum and instruction. Students are much more likely to succeed in school if the teacher teaches to the curriculum

developed by consensus, students practice the skills the curriculum emphasizes, and assessment programs are designed to determine the degree to which students have met curricular expectations.

Who are the Participants in a Professional Learning Community?

The participants in a professional learning community include the major stakeholders of the school, namely, the principal, the teachers and support staff, the students, and their family members.

Principals live with paradox—they must have a sense of urgency about improving their schools that is balanced by the patience that will sustain them over the long haul. They must focus on the future but also remain grounded in the reality of the present. They must have both a long-term view and a keen, up-close focus on the present. They must be both loose and tight, encouraging autonomy while at the same time demanding adherence to shared vision and values. They must celebrate successes while perpetuating discontent with the status quo. They must be strong leaders who empower others (DuFour & Eaker, 1998).

Teachers and support staff in a professional learning community are committed to students and their learning. They are responsible for managing and monitoring student learning. They must think systematically about their practice and learn from their experience. They see themselves as members of learning communities that are focused on learning first and then teaching. Teachers and support staff in these communities emphasize student engagement with significant content and focus on student performance and

production. They routinely collaborate with colleagues (DuFour & Eaker, 1998).

Students and their families expect to be included in the decision-making processes in a professional learning community. A high degree of communication exists between and among the school personnel, the students, and their families. School families promote and support the school and assist with student learning as partners in education.

Creating a professional learning community is a passionate, nonlinear, and persistent endeavor. Members of a school must be prepared to slosh around in the mess, to endure temporary discomfort, to accept uncertainty, to celebrate their discoveries, and to move quickly beyond their mistakes. They must recognize that even with the most careful planning, misunderstandings and uncertainty occur. People sometimes resort to old habits, and things do go wrong. At those moments, they must give one another the benefit of the doubt, maintain a sense of humor, and agree to disagree agreeably (DuFour & Eaker, 1998).

Methodology

The methodology of this study is both quantitative and qualitative. Interviews were conducted with key stakeholders in selected schools. School data and artifacts were collected (e.g., school newsletters and test score data). Surveys were sent to 20 accelerated schools in the same Midwest network in the fall of 2001. In addition to survey data, observations at each site occurred

over a three-year period. Furthermore, nine of the 20 network schools participated in a leadership institute and these schools collected data related to building culture using a tool (see Appendix B) developed by Linda Lambert (1998).

Attention was paid to changes in the learning community culture that occurred as the school community moved through the ASP implementation process. Culture is viewed in two ways for this discussion. Both the school as a whole and the individual classrooms have learning community cultures. These cultures are complex and often represent varying assumptions, beliefs and behaviors (see Finnan & Swanson, 2000 for a more complete description of culture).

Results

100 surveys (see Appendix A) were sent to 20 accelerated schools in a four state area in the fall of 2001. Survey questions were formulated using some of the descriptors regarding professional learning communities as suggested by DuFour and Eaker. Anywhere from four to six surveys were sent to each of the 20 schools. Individuals receiving the surveys were randomly selected, but all had participated in some formal accelerated school training in the last three years and some individuals had participated in more than one such training. A 21% return rate was realized. Individuals from large urban school districts (a total of 6 schools and 24% of the total surveys sent) did not return the surveys. Nine of the network schools with personnel participating

in the Leadership Institute training had a 46% return rate of the surveys (two of these schools are in a large urban district).

Results from the two surveys imply connections between the implementation of the ASP model and the formation of a professional learning community.

Survey One- Establishing Learning Communities in Our Schools

- Question 1. Answers indicated that all respondents are in schools that have a shared mission, vision, and set of values. Respondents were able to share their mission and vision and some of the most commonly held values.
- Question 2. 65% of the respondents are in schools that engage in collective inquiry, while the remaining 35% did not see consistent engagement in inquiry.
- Question 3. 90% of the respondents said it was a common occurrence for the staff to work in collaborative teams.
- Questions 4-5. 75% respondents claimed that staff members willingly experiment with ideas and 85% said their school administration support risk-taking.
- Question 6. 80% said that school administration support on-going professional development by providing appropriate time and resources.
- Questions 7-8. 90% of the schools are focused on continuous improvement and have regularly scheduled staff development opportunities. The majority of the staff development was based on

research (72%) and expanded the repertoire of teachers so that the needs of all students are met (83%).

- Questions 9-11. Respondents were evenly divided about parent participation in their respective schools (50% said it was a common occurrence for parents to help out in the school; 50% said it was not). In 80% of the schools parents are viewed as equal partners in the education of students and it was perceived that most parents feel welcome in the schools (85%).
- Questions 12-13. 90% stated that the majority of teachers are committed to students and their learning, but 50% of the time teachers resent staying after school for meetings.
- Question 14. Only 35% of the respondents said that teachers are engaged in reading professional books.
- Questions 15-18. School culture items reflected that it was common for children to be smiling (80%) and that generally, adult voices did not predominate the sounds heard in school hallways (30%). Interestingly, 40% of the respondents said that adults yell at their school, 40% said that adults did not yell at their school and 15% said that adults sometimes yelled (1 did not respond). Only 55% of the respondents said that children freely hug adults in their school. Some of the respondents mentioned that children freely hug teachers and school helpers, but not visitors/strangers.

- Question 19. 45% of the respondents said that teachers are focused on teaching and 45% said that teachers are focused on learning. 5% said that teachers are focused on both teaching and learning and 5% did not respond.
- Question 20. A variety of issues were suggested that needed changing at the respondents' schools: parent involvement issues were mentioned most often; followed by student-centered instruction, staff development and finally administrative support.

Survey Two – Leadership Capacity School Survey

Personnel from nine schools in the same geographic Accelerated Schools Network completed Lambert's school culture survey (Appendix B). The capacity of the respective school's culture for building leadership is found in Table 1.

Table One

Leadership Capacity School Survey

Category	Schools								
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
A.	63%	71%	68%	65%	65%	57%	76%	86%	64%
B.	54%	67%	65%	59%	61%	54%	69%	77%	60%
C.	61%	75%	67%	51%	59%	52%	66%	81%	72%
D.	55%	64%	63%	51%	56%	49%	70%	73%	72%
E.	56%	68%	67%	57%	59%	56%	67%	70%	67%

Note:

A. Broad-based participation in the work of leadership
B. Inquiry-based use of information to inform shared decisions/practice
C. Roles & responsibilities that reflect broad involvement & collaboration
D. Reflective practice/innovation as norm
E. High student achievement

The areas that received the lowest numbers are the areas of greatest need.

Accelerated Schools and the Formation of a Community of Commitment

What are the factors that either enhance or constrain the formation of a community of commitment; a professional learning community? And how does the implementation of the Accelerated Schools Model promote the formation of such a community within its network of schools? In this section I will outline how implementation of the Accelerated Schools Model enhances a school's

ability to become a professional learning community. I will also discuss some of the implementation challenges that constrain the efforts of schools.

The Accelerated Schools Model is both a philosophy and a systematic process focused on continuous school improvement. Its philosophy is simply stated in three foundational principles: Unity of Purpose, Building on Strengths, and Empowerment Coupled with Responsibility. These principles combined with the model's core set of values (i.e., equity, communication and collaboration, participation, community spirit, school as center of expertise, risk taking, reflection, experimentation and discovery, and trust) create the building blocks for the work each school undertakes.

The systematic process begins with setting a vision of where the school wants to go and taking stock of the present strengths and challenges of the school community. The school uses collaborative work groups to do this important inquiry work. The school analyzes the data, sets priorities based on a gap analysis between the taking stock data and its vision, and establishes collaborative work groups called cadres to begin addressing the primary challenge areas in the school community. Collective inquiry drives cadre work and no solutions or action plans are developed without careful analysis of data. In other words, decisions to implement new ideas are data driven. The work of the cadres is focused on improving student achievement and is motivated by providing powerful learning opportunities for all children. Creating school cultures that are exemplified by the three principles and core set of values is

much more difficult than writing about it. Training and mentoring schools through the implementation process is difficult work.

The Accelerated Schools Model is one of the few truly comprehensive school reform models. It encompasses all the school improvement work a school is engaged in. The model provides both a governance structure for making decisions and strategic planning that includes all stakeholders as well as a curricular approach grounded in Constructivist theory (what accelerated schools literature calls powerful learning). Many of today's reform models provide one or the other, but not both.

As mentioned before, DuFour and Eaker (1998) outline some constraining factors to the formation of professional learning communities. They identify complexity of task, a misplaced focus, lack of clarity, a lack of perseverance and a failure to appreciate and attend to the change process as key constraints. The results of survey one in this study show that despite the focus of the ASP model, schools do become bogged down in their work, especially the collective inquiry work of the cadres.

The ASP model provides for several of the factors that are necessary for the formation of a community of commitment. It requires schools to set forth a common vision promoting a sense of ownership and a unity of purpose. The work of accelerated schools is based on collective inquiry whether it is during the taking stock phase or after cadres are established. All work is completed in collaborative work groups and the focus of accelerated schools is on

continuous improvement. But as highlighted in survey one in particular, not all schools view themselves as professional learning communities.

I assert that a few key factors constrain this particular network of schools, and the National Network of Accelerated Schools in general, from fully implementing the ASP model and becoming professional learning communities. First, the work these schools engage in is complex. They are asked to address multiple challenge areas all at the same time. Usually, the people engaged in the work are full-time employees, typically classroom teachers and principals, with more responsibilities and obligations than time permits them to handle as it is. The complexity of the work and the limited time to do the work often lead to a lack of clarity and perseverance in accomplishing the desired outcomes (see Survey 2, section D). This becomes even more pronounced in schools that experience a significant turnover in staff, a change in principal, or a change in district leadership. But in schools that have limited turnover and have not experienced leadership changes, these issues still remain challenges, especially in relationship to the cadre work.

By design cadres are to meet once a week. Realistically cadres are lucky to meet every other week in this particular network of schools. The frequency of meetings is necessary to keep a flow to the work and to keep a focus or clarity of purpose on the work. Even with time devoted to regularly scheduled cadre meetings it is possible that members of the cadre are uncertain about what their work is, how to go about their work, and are stymied by the inquiry

process (see Survey 1, question 2 and Survey 2 section B). Lambert's Leadership Capacity School Survey (Appendix B) results support this.

Five of the nine schools had as their greatest need reflective practice and innovation as norm. Another area of great need was inquiry-based use of information to inform shared decisions and practice. These factors were not mitigated by the year of implementation the schools were in. Not only do the underutilization and or the misuse of inquiry constrain our network schools, so does the inconsistent implementation of powerful learning in all classrooms at every grade level. A fundamental belief of the Accelerated Schools Project is that all children can learn. We believe that all children can learn more than they presently are learning. This belief directly impacts what is expected in our schools in relationship to implementation of powerful learning.

If learning is discouraged, either in classrooms or in the school as a whole, then it is difficult, if not impossible to create a professional learning community. Professional development is a key to creating a context for learning and part of professional development is reflection on practice (see Survey 2, section D). It is through proactive professional development that teachers are freed to focus on student learning. They begin to focus on the context of the classroom (i.e., the culture) that best suits their students' strengths, needs, skills, and interests. It is through on-going, embedded, professional development that teachers move beyond the need to control classroom behavior and discourse to creating an environment where learning is a real priority. A positive learning environment grows when teachers

demonstrate care, respect, and high expectations for students and help students develop these same dispositions (Marks, Doane, and Secada 1996; Phelan, Davidson, and Yu, 1998;Wasley, Hampel, and Clark, 1997). Creating a professional learning community demands a new way of thinking about improvement because it does not accept the premise of a finished product. It is not a project to be completed; it is a life's work!

Concluding Thoughts

How then can a model provider develop a community of commitment in schools? What provisions can a model provider make to help network schools become professional learning communities? The short answer to this is that model providers, independently, can do nothing, but in partnership with schools possibilities exist.

Initially, model providers can determine if the ASP is a good fit for the schools that show an interest in adopting it. The term community, as mentioned earlier, places emphasis on relationships, and shared ideals or values. Schools need to demonstrate an affinity for the same values that the model espouses. Schools that buy-in to the Accelerated Schools Model, say they buy-in to the values and principles of the model.

An essential element that must be present for institutionalization of values is time; time for collaboration, time for conversation and reflection. Kotter (1996) suggests that transformation of culture takes anywhere from seven to ten years. And yet, most model providers in partnership with schools

are expected to do the work in half that time (typically 3-5 years or within the funding cycle of a grant). This presents a conundrum because it is only when shared values are committed to and owned, that school groups become a community of commitment. The school is able to move beyond mere espousal of values to an operationalization of them.

Second, the school and model provider establish a partnership that is a support system for *our* combined life's work. The established partnership needs to be long term if substantial improvements are to be made in *our* respective schools. This means that schools at a minimum must garner and maintain strong building leadership, sufficient funding, and district level support while the model provider must have ample support personnel for its schools.

Third, the model provider needs to be strategic in its training model. If schools are to be maintained in a network for a number of years (i.e., after the funding ends), then training opportunities must be flexible. Individual learning plans that fit network schools' unique needs, skills, and interests must be developed. Training must move beyond the informing stage to a formation of character and culture stage that ultimately becomes transformational in a school community.

An Illustration

I presently work with a school that is in its sixth year of implementation. The school began like many other network schools. That is, they were the poorest performing school in their district; had the highest percentage of

children living in poverty in their district; and were slated for closure if the achievement level of the students didn't improve. At the time of adoption of the ASP model, the school was privileged to have a dynamic, forward-thinking principal. She motivated her staff, engaged parents in decision-making, ran interference with the district, organized multiple opportunities for professional growth and made it very clear from the beginning that *not* learning was *not* an option. Everyone was expected to learn new things, share what was learned, and apply what was learned for the improvement of everyone.

As both a strong manager and an insightful instructional leader, she galvanized her teaching staff to a level of efficacy not experienced in many schools. They truly believed that what they were doing was of paramount importance and nothing was too hard for them to do (including staying after school and working with colleagues every day of the week) if it meant giving their students another opportunity to succeed. This meant that they sought funding from a variety of sources, created new ways to accomplish their goals, and negotiated exceptions to their union contracts. In a short three years, the school was recognized by the local press as the best elementary school in the region and was awarded $10,000. They were no longer the poorest scoring school in the district but rather it's top performing school. In the school's fourth year of implementation, the school was the fifth highest scoring school in the state on the state mandated tests. It was during the fourth year that the principal was asked to open a new school that was being built in her district—an offer she did not refuse.

The opening of the new building meant that this school lost its main cheerleader and two of its internal coaches. These were difficult losses in a school that had not experienced much turnover for three straight years. It also meant that staff members from around the district were moved; some through voluntary transfers to the new building and others involuntarily to old buildings that had vacancies.

As the model provider I worked closely with the staff and both new and old principals to insure what we hoped would be a smooth transition. We made collective provisions for additional training for new staff members and additional site visits to help support what we anticipated to be a year of change. During the fifth year of implementation the school continued to be one of the top performing schools in both the district and the state; the original staff got used to a new principal and new colleagues.

This story is shared to provide the context for what occurred this year. Significant staff leadership left the school (most started families) and new staff was hired. Integration of these staff members was not as thorough as in years past. Gradually, the ASP governance structure that was once so strong weakened—almost without notice. The cadres still met and worked, but unbeknown to most staff members, the cadres were feeling less and less that the work they were doing was meaningful. The steering committee never got around to meeting until mid-year—no one's fault—it just never got scheduled. This once proactive school, which had generated lots of action plans through inquiry, now had nothing to take to School as a Whole. Despite this apparent

collapse of the model, an emphasis on powerful learning was maintained and good learning continued to happen in classrooms, but teacher isolation rather than efficacy and collegiality became the norm.

My relationship with this school is one of true partnership. We've weathered the storms and celebrated the successes together. We hold a mutual respect and commitment to the truth and the truth is that the ASP model works. We are committed to further implementation of it at this school. It took only a couple of site visits and working with the internal coaches and staff for them to see what they needed to do. They own and trust the process and are committed to preserving a community of learners. They recognize and celebrate the fact that their vision is an ideal that will never fully be realized, but must always be worked on. They recognize that they are a bit out of shape, but are committed to staying in shape. They have a never-ending commitment to an essential, vital way of life in their school and have moved beyond just espousing shared values to actually living them. This is an accelerated school that has become a professional learning community.

References

DuFour, R. & Eaker, R. (1998). Professional Learning Communities at Work: Best Practices for Enhancing Student Achievement. Bloomington, IN: National Educational Service.

Elmore, R. (1996). In Miller, E., Idealists and cynics: The micropolitics of systemic school reform. Harvard Education Letter, 12(4), 1.

Finnan, C. & Swanson, J. (2000). Accelerating The Learning of all Students: Cultivating Culture Change in Schools, Classrooms, and Individuals. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.

Goodlad, J. (1984). A place called school: Prospects for the future. New York: McGraw-Hill.

Kanter, R. M. (1983). The Change Masters: Innovation and entrepreneurship in the American corporation. New York: Simon and Schuster.

Kotter, J. P. (1996). Leading Change. Boston: Harvard Business School Press.

Levin, H. (1996). What are accelerated schools? Accelerated Schools Newsletter, 6(1), 6.

Louis, K. S., Kruse, S., & Marks, H. (1996). Schoolwide professional community. In Fred Newmann and Associates (Ed.), Authentic achievement: Restructuring schools for intellectual quality (pp. 179-203). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Marks, H. M., Doane, K. B. & Secada, W. G. (1996). "Support for Student Achievement." In Authentic Achievement: Restructuring Schools for Intellectual Quality, edited by F.M. Newmann et al., 209-228. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Newmann, F. M. & Wehlage, G. G. (1995). Successful School Restructuring: A report to the public and educators by the Center for Restructuring Schools. Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin.

Phelan, P., Davidson, A. L., and Yu, H. C. (1998). Adolescents' Worlds: Negotiating Family, Peers, and School. New York: Teachers College Press.

Wasley, P. A., Hampel, R. L., & Clark, R. W. (1997). Kids and School Reform. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Appendix A

Establishing Learning Communities In Our Schools

Accelerated Schools' work is focused on creating a learning community for all stakeholder groups. In fact, one of the questions that each school asks itself when establishing its vision is: What will it take for our school to be a learning community for everyone? This survey provides an opportunity for you to rate how your school is doing in this aspect of your Accelerated School work. Thank you for taking the time to answer these important questions. Your input will enable us to support you more effectively.

1. Does your school have a shared mission, vision and set of values?
   Yes or No
   a. If yes, please share your mission or primary purpose at your school.

   b. What is your vision statement?

   c. What are the values most commonly adhered to at your school?

2. Does your school engage in collective inquiry?
   Yes or No
   a. If yes, briefly explain the process used and the areas of inquiry your school is presently engaged in.

3. Is it a common occurrence for your staff to work in collaborative teams?
   Yes or No
   a. If yes, share some examples of collaboration.

4. Do most staff members willingly experiment with ideas?
   Yes or No
   a. If yes, please provide an example.

5. Does your administration support risk-taking?
   Yes or No

6. Does your administration support on-going professional development by providing appropriate time and resources?
   Yes or No
   a. If yes, please explain.

7. Is your school focused on continuous improvement?
   Yes or No
   If yes, please answer the following questions. If no, move to next question.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

a. What do you mean by continuous improvement?
b. What strategies are you using at your school to become better?
c. How do you assess whether or not you are improving?

8. Does your school have regularly scheduled staff development opportunities?
Yes or No
If yes, please answer the following questions. If no, move to next question.

a. Is your staff development focused on improving student achievement?
Yes or No

b. Is your staff development based on research?
Yes or No

c. Does your staff development expand the repertoire of teachers so that needs of all students are met?
Yes or No

9. Is it a common occurrence to see parents helping out in your school?
Yes or No
a. If yes, what are some things parents are typically engaged in at your school?

10. Are parents viewed as equal partners in the education of your students?
Yes or No

11. Do parents and community members feel welcome in your school?
Yes or No
a. If yes, how do you know?

12. Are most teachers committed to students and their learning?
Yes or No

13. Do most teachers resent staying after school for meetings?
Yes or No

14. Are most teachers engaged in reading professional books?
Yes or No
a. If yes, list a text that was recently read.

15. When you walk down the hallways of your school are most children smiling?
Yes or No

16. When you walk down the hallways of your school do you hear mostly adult voices?

Yes or No

17. Do adults yell at your school?

Yes or No

18. Do children freely hug the adults at your school, even if they are visitors?

Yes or No

19. Are most teachers at your school focused on teaching or learning? (Underline either *teaching* or *learning*)

20. If you answered "no" to many of these questions (especially #1- #12) what do you think needs to change at your school in order for it to become a place of learning for more people? List at least three of your ideas.

1.
2.
3.

2001

Leadership Capacity School Survey

This school survey is designed to assess the leadership capacity conditions that exist in your school. The items are clustered by the characteristics of schools with high leadership capacity. After each staff member has completed the survey and totaled the results, this information can be presented in a chart that depicts schoolwide needs. Beside each item is a Likert-type scale:

1 = We do not do this in our school.
2 = We are starting to move in this area.
3 = We are making good progress here.
4 = We have this condition well established.
5 = We are refining our practice in this direction.

Circle the most appropriate number.

A. Broad-based, skillful participation in the work of leadership

In our school, we . . .

1. have established representative governance groups;	1	2	3	4	5
2. perform collaborative work in large and small groups;	1	2	3	4	5
3. model and demonstrate leadership skills;	1	2	3	4	5
4. organize for maximum interaction among adults and children;	1	2	3	4	5
5. share authority and resources;	1	2	3	4	5
6. express our leadership by attending to the learning of the entire school community;	1	2	3	4	5
7. engage each other in these opportunities to lead.	1	2	3	4	5
TOTAL (add circled numbers, down and then across columns) _____ =	—	—	—	—	—

B. Inquiry-based use of information to inform shared decisions and practice

In our school, we . . .

8. use a learning cycle that involves reflection, dialogue, inquiry, construction of new meanings and action;	1	2	3	4	5
9. make time available for this learning to occur (e.g., faculty meetings, ad hoc groups, teams);	1	2	3	4	5
10. connect our learning cycles to our highest priorities, our teaching and learning purposes;	1	2	3	4	5
11. identify, discover and interpret information and data/evidence that are used to inform our decisions and teaching practices;	1	2	3	4	5

12. have designed a comprehensive information system that keeps everyone informed and involved.	1	2	3	4	5
TOTAL (add circled numbers, down and then across columns) _____ =	—	—	—	—	—

C. Roles and responsibilities that reflect broad involvement and collaboration

In our school, we . . .

13. have designed our roles to include attention to our classrooms, the school, the community, and the profession;	1	2	3	4	5
14. are sensitive to indications that we are performing outside of traditional roles;	1	2	3	4	5
15. have developed new ways in which we can work together to nurture our relationships with each other;	1	2	3	4	5
16. have developed a plan for shared responsibilities in the implementation of our decisions and agreements.	1	2	3	4	5
TOTAL (add circled numbers, down and then across columns) _____ =	—	—	—	—	—

D. Reflective practice/innovation as the norm

In our school, we . . .

17. make sure that the learning cycle and time schedules include times and places for continuous and ongoing reflection;	1	2	3	4	5
18. demonstrate and encourage individual and group initiative by providing access to resources, personnel, and time;	1	2	3	4	5
19. have joined with networks of other schools and programs, both inside and outside the district, to secure feedback on our work;	1	2	3	4	5
20. practice and support innovation without unrealistic expectations of early success;	1	2	3	4	5
21. encourage and participate in collaborative innovations;	1	2	3	4	5
22. develop our own criteria for monitoring, assessment, and accountability regarding our individual and shared work.	1	2	3	4	5
TOTAL (add circled numbers, down and then across columns) _____ =	—	—	—	—	—

Note: 1 = We do not do this in our school; 2 = We are starting to move in this direction; 3 = We are making good progress here; 4 = We have this condition well established; 5 = We are refining our practice in this area.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

E. High student achievement

In our school, we . . .

23. work with members of the school community to establish challenging and humane expectations and standards;	1	2	3	4	5
24. design, teach, coach, and assess authentic curriculum, instruction and performance-based assessment processes that insure that all children learn;	1	2	3	4	5
25. provide systematic feedback to children and families about student progress;	1	2	3	4	5
26. receive feedback from families about student performance and school programs;	1	2	3	4	5
27. have redesigned roles and structures to develop and sustain resiliency in children (e.g. teacher as coach/advisor/mentor, schoolwide guidance programs, community service).	1	2	3	4	5
TOTAL (add circled number, down and then across columns) _____ =	—	—	—	—	—

Comments, perceptions, insights that you want to remember:

Note: 1 = We do not do this in our school; 2 = We are starting to move in this direction; 3 = We are making good progress here; 4 = We have this condition well established; 5 = We are refining our practice in this area.

School scoring. Add staff totals for each area, A to E. Possible scores can be found by multiplying the number possible for each category by the number of staff completing the survey (see column "Possible Scores" in the following table). List the "School Totals" from the following table on chart paper for all to see. The areas that received the lowest numbers are the areas of greatest need. Discuss each area, distinguishing among items in order to identify areas of growth. Columns 1 and 2 in the survey represent areas of greatest need. Columns 3 and 4 represent strengths. Column 5 represents exemplary work as a school with high leadership capacity. Select areas to address in your school planning.

Characteristics	**School Totals**	**Possible Scores**
A. Broad-based participation in the work of leadership		35x = ___
B. Inquiry-based use of information to inform shared decisions and practice		25x = ___
C. Roles and responsibilities that reflect broad involvement and collaboration		20x = ___
D. Reflective practice/innovation as the norm		30x = ___
E. High student achievement		25x = ___

Note: In column 3, x = no. of staff completing the survey.

U.S. Department of Education
Office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI)
National Library of Education (NLE)
Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC)

ERIC

REPRODUCTION RELEASE

(Specific Document)

I. DOCUMENT IDENTIFICATION:

Title: Accelerated Schools as Learning Communities

Author(s): Dr. Julie K. Biddle

Corporate Source: Dayton Satellite Center for Accelerated Schools

Publication Date:

II. REPRODUCTION RELEASE:

In order to disseminate as widely as possible timely and significant materials of interest to the educational community, documents announced in the monthly abstract journal of the ERIC system, *Resources in Education* (RIE), are usually made available to users in microfiche, reproduced paper copy, and electronic media, and sold through the ERIC Document Reproduction Service (EDRS). Credit is given to the source of each document, and, if reproduction release is granted, one of the following notices is affixed to the document.

If permission is granted to reproduce and disseminate the identified document, please CHECK ONE of the following three options and sign at the bottom of the page.

The sample sticker shown below will be affixed to all Level 1 documents

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Sample

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

1

Level 1

☒

Check here for Level 1 release, permitting reproduction and dissemination in microfiche or other ERIC archival media (e.g., electronic) and paper copy.

The sample sticker shown below will be affixed to all Level 2A documents

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL IN MICROFICHE, AND IN ELECTRONIC MEDIA FOR ERIC COLLECTION SUBSCRIBERS ONLY, HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Sample

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

2A

Level 2A

☐

Check here for Level 2A release, permitting reproduction and dissemination in microfiche and in electronic media for ERIC archival collection subscribers only

The sample sticker shown below will be affixed to all Level 2B documents

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL IN MICROFICHE ONLY HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Sample

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

2B

Level 2B

☐

Check here for Level 2B release, permitting reproduction and dissemination in microfiche only

Documents will be processed as indicated provided reproduction quality permits.
If permission to reproduce is granted, but no box is checked, documents will be processed at Level 1.

I hereby grant to the Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC) nonexclusive permission to reproduce and disseminate this document as indicated above. Reproduction from the ERIC microfiche or electronic media by persons other than ERIC employees and its system contractors requires permission from the copyright holder. Exception is made for non-profit reproduction by libraries and other service agencies to satisfy information needs of educators in response to discrete inquiries.

Sign here, → please

Signature: Julie K. Biddle	Printed Name/Position/Title: Julie K. Biddle, Director	
Organization/Address: Dayton Satellite Ctr. for Accelerated Schools 300 College Park - Chaminade Dayton, OH 45469-0510	Telephone: 937-229-4517	FAX: 937-299-2169
	E-Mail Address: Julie.Biddle@notes.udayton.edu	Date: 3/31/02

(over)

III. DOCUMENT AVAILABILITY INFORMATION (FROM NON-ERIC SOURCE):

If permission to reproduce is not granted to ERIC, *or*, if you wish ERIC to cite the availability of the document from another source, please provide the following information regarding the availability of the document. (ERIC will not announce a document unless it is publicly available, and a dependable source can be specified. Contributors should also be aware that ERIC selection criteria are significantly more stringent for documents that cannot be made available through EDRS.)

Publisher/Distributor:
Address:
Price:

IV. REFERRAL OF ERIC TO COPYRIGHT/REPRODUCTION RIGHTS HOLDER:

If the right to grant this reproduction release is held by someone other than the addressee, please provide the appropriate name and address:

Name:
Address:

V. WHERE TO SEND THIS FORM:

Send this form to the following ERIC Clearinghouse:

ERIC CLEARINGHOUSE ON ASSESSMENT AND EVALUATION
UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND
1129 SHRIVER LAB
COLLEGE PARK, MD 20742-5701
ATTN: ACQUISITIONS

However, if solicited by the ERIC Facility, or if making an unsolicited contribution to ERIC, return this form (and the document being contributed) to:

ERIC Processing and Reference Facility
4483-A Forbes Boulevard
Lanham, Maryland 20706

Telephone: 301-552-4200
Toll Free: 800-799-3742
FAX: 301-552-4700
e-mail: ericfac@inet.ed.gov
WWW: http://ericfac.piccard.csc.com

EFF-088 (Rev. 2/2000)